

WHAT ARE EMPLOYEES LOOKING FOR FROM THEIR WORKPLACES IN 2022?

A review of current literature and forecasting of
2022 employment and hiring trends



Figure 1. Woman working from home. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Karolina Grabowska.

Research compiled by Dineable Marketing Team
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INTRODUCTION



Figure 2. Masked man on phone and laptop. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Monstera Production.

The coronavirus pandemic has undoubtedly changed the world forever, accelerating a long-gestating movement away from the traditional office-centered structure we've gotten used to over the past century or so. The research in this white paper digs deeper into insights released over the past two quarters of 2021 by human resource management companies and research consultancies related to employment trends primarily in the United States and also globally.

The world is more connected than ever, ironically, as a result

of remote work and as the world opens back up, the demand for jobs in different industries is highly volatile based on many factors including increased demand for higher salaries and flexible work.

In this paper we will answer the questions on many managers' minds, "What are employees today looking for?" Additionally we will briefly address issues relating to inequalities and inequities that have risen due to the pandemic and how our governments and economies at large can address them moving forward.

Although coronavirus rates slowed in places with high vaccination rates last spring, we are now facing uncertainty due to new strains of the coronavirus, including, the delta variant, amongst other new, highly contagious strains.¹

The uncertainty about whether or not we are yet recovering from the pandemic combined with current workforce trends toward flexible work indicates that the world of work as we know it may be changed forever.

We don't know where the future work is headed exactly, but experts have weighed in that the new normal of work brought on by COVID restrictions might be here to stay.

“The uncertainty about whether or not we are yet recovering from the pandemic combined with current workforce trends toward flexible work indicates that the world of work as we know it may be changed forever.”



Figure 3. City on a bay. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Domenico Bandiera.

While some parts of the economy appear to be returning to where they were pre-pandemic, other parts of the economy appear volatile. There have been new spikes in coronavirus infections in parts of the country and in parts of the world with low vaccine access and high mortality rates where there is not enough access to medical care. There is no evidence that things will stabilize anytime soon. This instability is similarly being reflected in our economies as managers and executives try to figure out the best next steps for proceeding in bringing employees “back to work.”

Many organizations are reporting adjusting their management strategies to allow for hybrid working schedules, indicating some permanence to the recent changes to the way we work.²

¹ Alvin Powell. “The Present and Future of COVID Variants.” Aug 5, 2021. *Harvard Gazette*.

² Andrea Alexander, et al. “What executives are saying about the future of hybrid work,” *McKinsey & Company*. May 17, 2021.

Employee quits reached a historic high in April 2021 according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, signaling that employees are raising their standards for where they work.

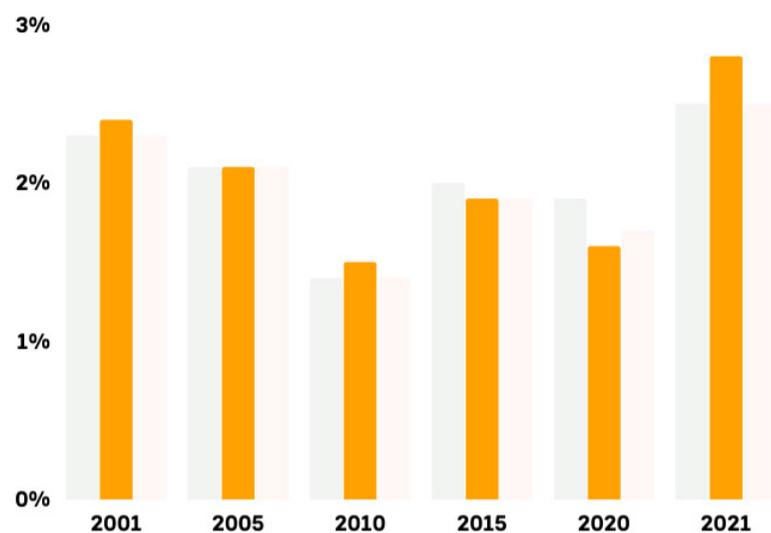


Figure 4. Graph displaying the percentage of employees quitting workplaces per month (March, April, May) for the following years: 2001, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020, 2021. Infographic was designed by and for use by Dineable.

Employee turnover hit new records in 2021 according to new insights.

There has been a surge in new job openings. Despite this boom in what looks like prosperity, the United States has also recently seen record numbers for employee turnover. According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employee quits reached an all-time high just a few months ago in April 2021.³

According to this data, it seems like employees are now setting higher standards not only for what they do for a living, but where they work. This encompasses not just the company name, perks, and salary, but work-life balance, how employees are treated, career growth, and health benefits.⁴

The younger majority of the workforce, millennials, seem to be driving this change. Research shows that this

demographic wants more transparency in what is happening inside of their companies. This younger swath of the workforce is also driving the demand for management to treat employees as humans not just resources that drive revenue.

More transparency means more accountability in diversity, equity and inclusion.⁵ DEI has been a new buzzword amongst HR professionals, mostly because of demand by employees for more inclusive workplaces. The United States is more diverse than most companies.⁶ HR departments still have a lot of work to do. With many people stuck indoors during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, people had more time to pay attention to protests and social justice issues on social media. Dialogues previously happening exclusively in certain communities became mainstream conversations. These conversations and this awareness has trickled down into workplaces. Issues that impact large segments of the population will need to be addressed by workplaces that are not yet doing so. Inclusivity is the future.

³“Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey.” *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*. Accessed July 26, 2021. <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/JTS0000000000000000QUR>

⁴“Talent Accelerator: The Forces That Are Shaping The New Working World.” *Fieldwork by Citrix*. 2020.

⁵Havrilla, Chris. “Predictions 2021: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.” *Deloitte*. Jan 22, 2021.

⁶“The Future of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 2021.” *Survey by HR.com and HR Research Institute*. January 2021.



Figure 5. Image of three employees, two are high fiving over a workspace. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Alexander Suhorucov.



Figure 6. Man with book in front of computer monitor. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Andrea Piacquadio.



Similarly, health and wellness is on a lot of people's minds. For many the pandemic was a time of turmoil, where people were presented with the fragility of their finances, their physical health, and their mental health. Even before the coronavirus pandemic, the United States had seen a decades long increase in lifestyle diseases. Lifestyle diseases are chronic illnesses that can be prevented through healthy eating and exercise, hence the term, "lifestyle."⁷ Recent human history plus the coronavirus pandemic has cemented for much of the United States, that the population as a whole needs to start taking their health more seriously.

Health benefits packages and the expectations of these packages are not what they once were. Access to primary care physicians alone is no longer enough. People want mental health benefits and preventative healthcare services included in their healthcare plans. People also want digital health and access to providers virtually, where possible. Many health insurance plans started offering this before the coronavirus pandemic. Those insurance plans that weren't have expedited the launch of these services to meet the demand.



Figure 7. Person on a mountain. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Rachel Claire.

Many workplaces have even stepped up to offer work wellness programs in addition to standard health benefits

packages.⁸ The more these types of benefits are offered, the more demand there will be for these types of benefits. This is quickly becoming the norm.

Speaking of mental health, people have figured out how to have more work-life balance in the era of remote work. While some studies have shown that employee work days have gotten longer during the pandemic with remote employees reporting working up to one to two hours more each day, many employees also report exercising more, cooking more at home, and learning to set boundaries with work devices so that they can enjoy more free-time and work-life balance.⁹

That brings us to the buzzword of our current world, *flexible work*. Before the pandemic, flexible work was a nice perk. Now people expect it.

“Before the pandemic, flexible work was a nice perk. Now people expect it.”

People no longer want to spend money and time on their commutes, hence the high demand for remote and hybrid work environments.

Researchers have been studying flexible work arrangements and the correlation between work-life balance, happiness, and productivity for more than a decade.¹⁰ Conversations about flexible work for raising families and co-working were happening even before last economic crisis in 2008.¹¹ Between the rise of the age of tech startups, creative skillsets being more valued in the workplace, equitable division of work at home amongst genders, and increased automation, the move toward flexible work is a natural one that was coming regardless of the coronavirus pandemic or any other pandemic in the current “age of pandemics.”¹²

⁷ Al-Maskari, Fatma. “Lifestyle Diseases: An Economic Burden on the Health Services.” *UN Chronicle (blog)*. Accessed Aug 9, 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/lifestyle-diseases-economic-burden-health-services>

⁸ “How to Establish and Design a Wellness Program.” *SHRM (How-To Guides)*. Accessed Aug 11, 2021. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/how-to-guides/pages/howtoestablishanddesignawellnessprogram.aspx>

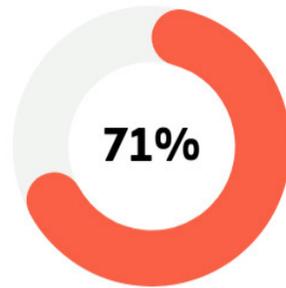
⁹ “Future of Work.” Live Segment. Aired Jul 27, 2021. *Bloomberg*.

¹⁰ Laurel A. McNall, et al. “Flexible Work Arrangements, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions: The Mediating Role of Work-to-Family Enrichment.” Apr 15, 2009. *The Journal of Psychology*, 144:1, 61-81, DOI: 10.1080/00223980903356073

¹¹ Marko Orel, Ondrej Dvoutely, & Vanessa Ratten. *The Flexible Workplace: Coworking and Other Modern Workplace Transformations*. Switzerland: Springer, 2021.

¹² Brilliant, Larry. “The Age of Pandemics.” May 2, 2009. *The Wall Street Journal*.

THE LATEST RESEARCH SUGGESTS



71% of employees expect remote work to be at least partially supported by organizations post-pandemic.

75% of hybrid or remote knowledge workers say their expectations for working flexibly have increased.

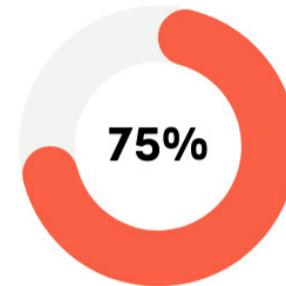


Figure 8. Graph showing percentage of employees that expect remote work to be supported by organizations and percentage of workers that say their expectations of working flexibly have increased since the pandemic. Infographic was designed by and for use by Dineable.

The coronavirus pandemic has obviously brought the conversation about flexible work to the mainstream. The general consensus seems to be that not only do employees want flexible work, but when implemented correctly, it can improve productivity. The Harvard Business Review recently stated that creating a balanced work culture is the way to do this.¹³ A balanced work culture is not just about an employee's life outside of work, but also about what is offered when employees are at work.¹⁴

Similarly, a study by McKinsey & Company says that companies can foster productivity through opportunities to connect.¹⁵ We traditionally see connecting with colleagues as something that happens over happy hour or an in-person meeting or event, but some employees have stated that remote work has actually helped them to foster connections. This is largely due to the use of technology for collaboration.

Many employees are even taking it a step further, stating that they now place an emphasis on employee engagement

from their HR departments.^{4,16}

As expected there has been some pushback from executives and management on continuing flexible work plans, however, most executives are embracing it.^{17,18} A year into "the new normal," also has most employers reporting success with remote offices than in the spring of 2020.¹⁹ And a whopping 55% of employers expect to offer an option to work from home at least one day a week moving forward.²⁰

The term for the complete employee experience from the job search process, the actual work environment and experience while working, through leaving the company is aptly termed employee experience, or EX.²¹ The employee experience will impact company reviews, employee satisfaction, and overall worker productivity. This is something that employees and the HR management industry alike are placing a higher emphasis on. The concept, furthermore, is thought to influence a company's overall performance and growth.²²

¹³ "Whiteboard Session: How To Work Successfully Across Borders." Aug 14, 2018. *Harvard Business Review*.

¹⁴ Jordan Menzel. "Measuring Company Culture Through Employee Culture Surveys." Feb 20, 2018. *Qualtrics*.

¹⁵ Lund, Susan, et al. "What 800 executives envision for the postpandemic workforce." Sep 23, 2020. *McKinsey & Company*.

¹⁶ "Big Expectations: 2021 HR Trends." Dec 2020. *iSolved*.

¹⁷ Geoff Webb. "How To Keep Your Employees From Migrating To Sunnier Climes Post-Pandemic." Jul 26, 2021. *Forbes*.

¹⁸ Jack Kelly. "Morgan Stanley CEO James Gorman on his Return-to-Work Plan: 'If You Can Go To A Restaurant In New York City, You Can Come Into The Office.'" Jun 15, 2021. *Forbes*.

¹⁹ "It's time to reimagine where and how work will get done." Jan 12, 2021. *PwC's US Remote Work Survey*.

²⁰ Edd Gent. "What remote jobs tell us about inequality." Sep 23, 2020 *BBC*.

²¹ "What is EX? Your ultimate guide to employee experience." *Qualtrics*. Accessed July 27, 2021. <https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/employee/employee-experience/>

²² "Win With Empathy: Global Talent Trends 2020-2021." 2020. *Mercer*.



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I'm reminded of the Arctic tern — a bird weighing only a few ounces that flies, every year, from one end of the globe to the other in search of perfect weather. As soon as winter begins to set in at their Arctic home, they fly the entire length of the globe and settle in for an antipodal summer in the Antarctic. In short, they won't settle for less than perfect and are willing to travel to get it.

— Geoff Webb, Forbes

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Figure 9. Quote was originally written by Geoff Webb for Forbes. Graphic was designed by and for use by Dineable.



Research is also showing that people are migrating away from urban centers, areas that used to be central to commerce, to suburbs and rural areas, signalling that employees expect that opportunities to work remotely, or at least flexibly, will continue. Experts have been speculating that workers may start choosing where they live for factors

other than work, such as family, convenience, culture, and lifestyle.

The potential for remote work is vast. An article by Nikkei Asia stated that the global workforce has a potential total of 600 million remote workers.²³



Figure 10. Globe Graphic. Designed by and for use by Dineable.

²³ Aiko Munakata. "Cross-border online work increases 30% amid COVID-19 pandemic." Jul 27, 2021. *Nikkei Asia*.

THE DARK SIDE

There are obvious downsides to this new type of economy. Remote work only applies to certain types of jobs, particularly white collar workers and executives, also known as “knowledge workers,” that are already usually making higher salaries than essential workers. These “white collar jobs” account for 46% of all wages in the United States.¹⁹ In fact, a majority (60%) of jobs in the United States cannot be done remotely at all.¹⁵ These disparities grow as we look at global statistics to include emerging markets.



Figure 11. Image of a worker welding in a factory. Provided by Adobe Stock Photos.

The pandemic disproportionately hurt people with the lowest incomes and education levels. Globally, 120 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty.²⁴ Researchers have postulated that this pandemic could further increase disparities between emerging markets and global markets.²³



Figure 12. Image of a boy in a broken van in Syria. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Ahmed Akacha.

Within the United States, natural disasters and pandemics typically result in socioeconomic inequalities.²⁵ This particular pandemic was disproportionately tough on older adults, communities of color, people in customer facing roles or manual jobs, and people with family members in financial straits.

Should this trend toward remote work continue without an increase in minimum wage and wider access to education and training, this could cause further spread in income inequalities and racial disparities.

There is room for equity in the way that corporations build out flexible work plans. There is similarly room for equity in the ways that federal and local governments plan to address issues as they arise. Laws about minimum wage, workplace safety, and availability of affordable government issued financial aid and student loans for those pursuing higher education could be adjusted to combat inequality.



Figure 13. Image of a group of recent college graduates. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Rodnae Productions.

²⁴ Francisco H.G. Ferreira. “Inequality in the Time of COVID-19.” Summer 2021. *IMF.org: Finance and Development*.

²⁵ Gertrude Gauthier, et al. “Exacerbating Inequalities: Social Networks, Racial/Ethnic Disparities, and the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States.” March 2021. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B, Vol 76, Iss 3, pages e88-e92*.

There are some upsides to new hybrid workplace trends. Many people believe that the use of technology will break down hierarchies within organizations and allow for more communication between different tiers of companies.

It is hard to say exactly where the future of work lies, but it is safe to say that most companies are at least considering the possibility of hybrid and flexible work programs that keep their employees' well-being in mind.

Since consumer trends are moving toward higher salaries and more demand for free-time and work-life balance, it

seems like most companies and corporations will have to adjust to meet this demand. It also seems like the scales are fairly unbalanced in-terms of workplaces that are offering fair wages and benefits for workers that have to work in person. Companies like Amazon have increased their wages to keep up with demand, but many smaller businesses and some major corporations still lag behind. There are a lot of mysteries around what will happen over the next year, but it is safe to say that most workplaces should be prepared for more changes and more pivots toward the real future of work.



Figure 14. Four people wearing masks made of found objects. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Monstera Production.

CONCLUSION

“Volatility, complexity, and rapid change *is* the new normal.”

Forward-thinking organizations have no choice at this point but to embrace hybrid and remote work. They and their employees will be better for it. People will be happier, productivity and satisfaction will rise, and profits will go up.

The world is constantly changing whether or not we want it to. The key to surviving uncertain times is adaptability. As always in human history, those that adapt will survive. As bleak as it sounds, these same lessons need to be applied to

businesses if they want to continue to attract the best talent and not only to survive these uncertain times, but to thrive. A recent Harvard Business Review article stated that the COVID-19 pandemic brought adaptation to the forefront of everyone’s minds and that volatility, complexity, and rapid change *is* the new normal.²⁶

Today, that is how we need to think about this. Times are uncertain. The threat of the delta variant and other new variants of the coronavirus are looming. We don’t know what is going to happen next. But as long as we adapt, we will survive.



Figure 15. Robot hand and tech landscape. Image obtained from Pexels. Shot by Tara Winstead.

Thank you for joining us for this journey through time into 2022 and the future of work.

²⁶ Kotter, John, Vanessa Akhtar, and Gaurav Gupta. “Is Your Organization Surviving Change – or Thriving in It?” Aug 13, 2021. *Harvard Business Review*.

ABOUT DINEABLE



Figure 16. Image of virtual chef taco night event on laptop with taco ingredients around laptop. Shot by Sheena Pradhan for Dineable.

We founded Dineable back in 2017 to help people connect through food. Back then, Dineable was a software platform to help hospitality professionals manage guest dietary restrictions.

We believed then as we do now, that sharing a meal is the most effective way for people to gain perspective and build empathy. Facilitating these connections between friends, families, and colleagues is the very heart of hospitality. When something gets in the way of that, whether it is a food allergy or a global quarantine due to a pandemic, we focus on creating progress and finding new ways to achieve enduring goals.

With COVID-19 ravaging the world, it was clear that the biggest barrier to sharing a meal was sharing a physical space. We launched our virtual catering service in June 2020. We figured that food delivery was already ubiquitous, so why not bring catering into people's homes for their events? There's something special that happens when a group of people taste the same flavors at the same time, an unspoken shared moment that is impossible to replicate. We wanted to make that possible for people separated by hundreds or thousands of miles.

And we did.

In the last year Dineable has served almost 5,000 meals to people separated by an average distance of 609 miles. The meals, snacks, and beverages lovingly crafted by our culinary partners have traveled more than 2.9 million cumulative miles, to 51 states and more than 500 zip codes. We facilitated shared culinary experiences across states, borders, and oceans. These numbers continue to grow exponentially as people recognize the need to stay connected even when we are apart.

We know that geographically distributed teams will stay distributed, and that flexible work is here to stay. So are virtual events. The technology for virtual events will continue to improve. Hybrid events will help everyone experience the best of both worlds, while reducing budgets, helping guests save on travel and lodging while still providing unique and inclusive experiences.

This is the present and the future, and we are so excited to continue to be a part of growing this new segment of hospitality with our guests, our customers, and our inimitable and growing list of culinary partners.

White paper written for ©Dineable, a Dietary DNA, LLC company, 2021

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